

Federated States of Micronesia's Yap State Breaks Down Silos during Its Organization Self-Assessment

Working together to leverage existing resources, divisions within Yap State's health agency were able to overcome communication challenges and prioritize next steps.

In the United States Associated Pacific Islands, including the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), there are limited established standards and measures for public health. As a result, health departments have found that organizational self-assessment (OSA) is a valuable way to evaluate and understand their own systems and program operations in order to strengthen their services. For FSM's Yap State, the OSA process also provided an opportunity to assess its functions and operations against the national standards and measures set forth by the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB).

Prior to starting the OSA, Yap Department of Health Services' categorical programs were functioning in silos. As a result, each program was not privy to the resources, functions, and tools available in other programs. The OSA gave program coordinators the opportunity to communicate with one another and answer each other's questions. As a result, the health department was able to identify resources and capacities that could assist the agency as a whole if divisions worked together moving forward.

Steps Taken:

- In preparation for PHAB accreditation, the FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs Performance Improvement Manager (PIM) gained leadership support to conduct an OSA in one of the FSM states. Yap was the first state to express interest in participating in an OSA process.
- With ASTHO's technical assistance, FSM's PIM started planning an OSA process for Yap. The PIM then met with the Yap team to provide an overview of the PHAB standards and measures. FSM's PIM found the Yap team very eager and willing to participate.
- During the OSA, Yap staff discussed the resources and tools they had and prioritized a list of next steps and areas to improve. Staff identified increased opportunities for staff-wide Quality Improvement training as a priority. Staff also shared issues they had in their individual programs and learned about QI tools that could help solve these problems.

- Yap's OSA process allowed participants to discuss problems as an agency instead of programmatically.
- Through the OSA process, participants identified a need for staff-wide quality improvement training.

Results:

- When surveyed about the Yap OSA, staff reported that the process made it easy for them to talk about problems as a whole agency instead of programmatically.
- Survey respondents reported that programs that were working in silos are now working more collaboratively because they are more informed and involved in the QI projects. For example, the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) program, Immunization program, Dental program, and

nurses are now working more closely together. Children visiting the Well Baby Clinic are now referred to the Immunization program for any needed vaccinations and to the Dental program for routine teeth checkups or fluoride. In addition, MCH and nurses are working with each other to improve newborn hearing screening.

Lessons Learned:

- Leadership support is a fundamental and critical component of moving an OSA process forward. Without leadership requiring every Yap program's participation, this OSA might have ended up as another categorical program's activity being implemented in isolation.
- Yap State's OSA process has encouraged other FSM states to participate in an OSA process. Because the OSA is based on the PHAB standards and measures, other FSM jurisdictions are interested to find out how they can also become accredited.
- The dedication to follow through and clear messaging are important for a successful OSA. Initially, Yap's OSA was perceived as an activity pertaining to one agency program. However, once leadership made it clear to all programs that the OSA would benefit the agency as a whole, staff became more interested in the process and wanted to find out how their agency was doing compared to the national standards and measures.
- All staff involved in the OSA needed to be educated on the PHAB standards and measures in order to accurately represent the agency during the OSA. Without the proper knowledge of PHAB standards and measures, staff could give inaccurate responses and interfere with the OSA results.
- Cross-agency staff participation is critical to the success of an OSA. Yap's OSA was based on the [10 Essential Public Health Services](#). Staff functioning under each of the ten essential services need to engage in the assessment to give accurate and reliable representation of that function for the agency. Absence of key people to best represent the agency in any particular function of the essential services would not give a more accurate picture of the agency.

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